

# Evidence- Based Practices

## Learning from Adult Drug Court Research

Is what's good for the  
goose really good for the  
gander?

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# What We Already Know



**Oregon Drug Court Cost Study: Statewide Costs and Promising Practices Final Report**

Submitted to:  
Oregon Judicial Department  
Director's Office  
Salem, OR 97331

Submitted by:  
NAC Research  
Portland, OR 97208

Executive Summary

**Justice Center's Criminal Justice / Mental Health Consensus Project**

Sign up for the monthly CJ/MH Consensus Project newsletter to receive the latest news and updates.

The Consensus Project is a collaborative effort to develop a national consensus on the best practices for the criminal justice system.

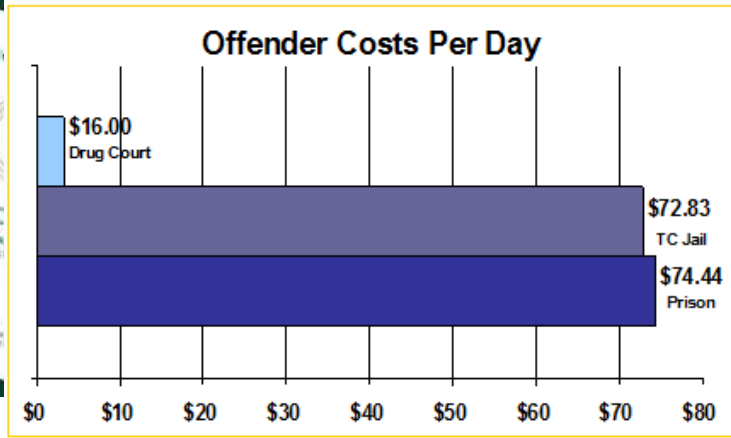
For more information, visit [www.justicecenter.org](http://www.justicecenter.org)

**NEW!**

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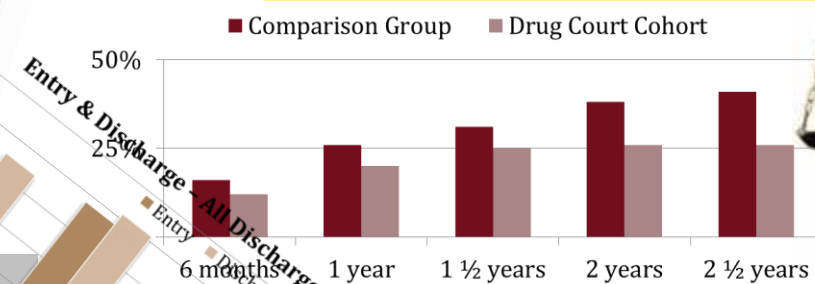
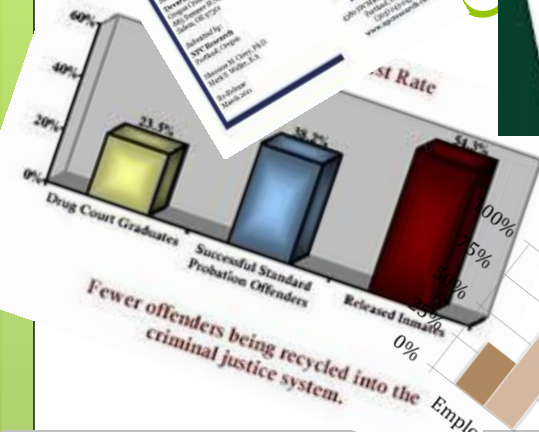


**The Bronx Family Treatment Court 2009-2010**

Executive Summary

Submitted to:  
Bronx Family Treatment Court  
Bronx, NY 10460

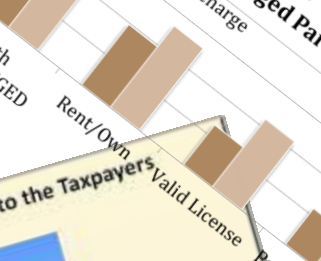
Submitted by:  
NAC Research  
Portland, OR 97208



**Do Adult Drug Courts Work? National Results from a Multi-Site Study (MADCE)**

Submitted to:  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of the Attorney General  
Washington, DC 20530

Submitted by:  
NAC Research  
Portland, OR 97208



**NADCP**  
National Association of Drug Court Professionals

## need to Know

**Research Update on Adult Drug Courts**

By Douglas B. McIvor, J.D., Ph.D.  
Chief of Science, Law & Policy  
December 2010

The effectiveness of adult Drug Courts is not a matter of conjecture. It is the product of more than two decades of exhaustive scientific research. From their inception, Drug Courts have been designed to be evidence-based, to be replicable, and to be sustainable. They have been shown to be effective in reducing recidivism, improving employment, and reducing costs to the taxpayers.

**Effectiveness**

More research has been published on the effects of adult Drug Courts than virtually all other criminal justice programs combined. By 2010, the scientific community had concluded beyond a reasonable doubt that Drug Courts reduce criminal recidivism, typically measured by lower re-arrest rates for new offenses and technical violations. Table 1 summarizes the results of five independent meta-analyses all reporting superior effects for Drug Courts over randomized or matched comparison samples of drug offenders who were on probation or undergoing traditional criminal justice processing. In each analysis, the results revealed that Drug Courts significantly reduced re-arrest or recidivism rates by an average of approximately 8 to 26 percent, with the "average of the average" reflecting approximately a 10 to 15 percent reduction in recidivism.

**Net Benefits of Drug Court**

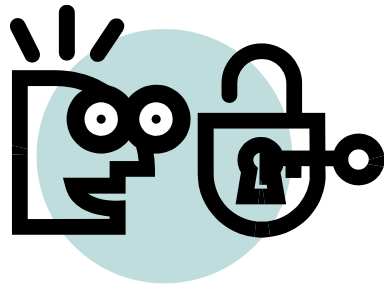
Submitted to:  
U.S. Department of Justice  
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Washington, DC 20530

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Portland, OR 97208



# Drug Court Works... But Why?

From “results”...



...to unlocking the “black box”

# NPC Research's Work

- Looked at 101 drug courts nationwide
- 69 included recidivism and cost evaluations
- Study included 32,719 individuals (16,317 drug court and 16,402 comparison group)



# NPC Research's Work

- Trying to unlock the “black box” of drug courts according to 10 Key Components
- What are the best drug courts doing?
- Found over 50 practices related to significantly lower recidivism, lower costs or both



# NPC Research's Work

- Top 10 Best Practices for Reducing Recidivism
- Top 10 Best Practices for Reducing Cost (Increasing Cost Savings)



# NPC Research's Work

## Recidivism Top 5

- 5) A representative from treatment attends drug court team meetings (staffings)
- 4) Treatment communicates with court via email
- 3) Judge spends an average of 3 minutes or greater per participant during status review hearings
- 2) Participants are expected to have greater than 90 days clean (negative drug tests) before graduation
- 1) Program caseload (number of active participants) is less than 125



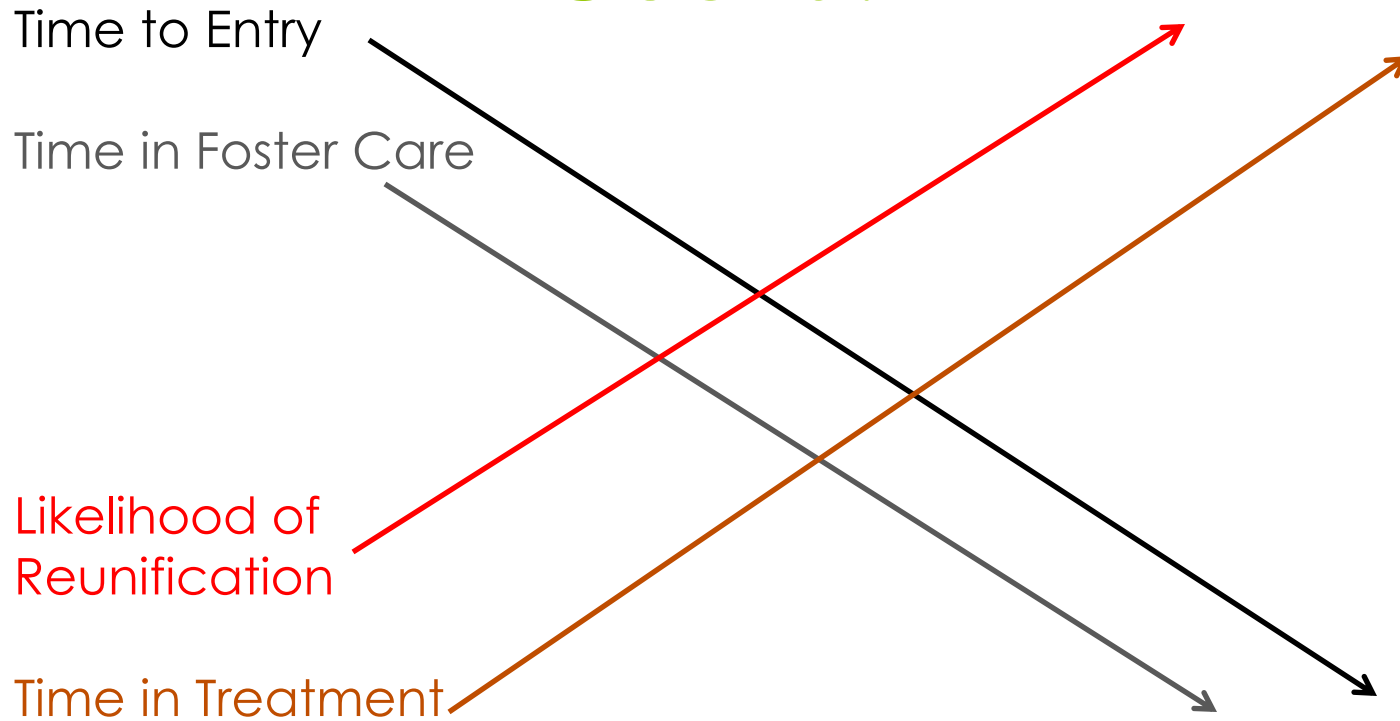
# NPC Research's Work Cost Savings Top 5

- 5) In order to graduate participants must have a job or be in school
- 4) The defense attorney attends drug court team meetings (staffings)
- 3) Sanctions are imposed immediately after non-compliant behavior (e.g., in advance of a client's regularly scheduled court hearing)
- 2) The results of program evaluations have led to modifications in drug court operations
- 1) Review of the data and stats has led to modifications in drug court operations

# What about Family Dependency Treatment Courts?

- ◉ Focus on services to child and parents, particularly together
- ◉ Time to entry – program and treatment
- ◉ Length of treatment
- ◉ Frequent counseling sessions
- ◉ Drug testing
- ◉ Relationship with Judge

# What about Family Dependency Treatment Courts?



# Great... but What About the Children?

- Guardians' attendance at status hearings
- Judicial status hearings are a key component
- Avoiding over-reliance of detention sanctions
- Reducing youths' drug/delinquent associations
- Enhancing guardians' supervision of teens
- Modeling consistent and effective disciplinary practices

# Mental Health Courts?

## Why of Course!

- Including participants with felonies
- Accepting all types of mental health diagnoses
- Targeting those with serious behavioral needs (severe impairment)
- Recognizing and treating co-occurring disorders

# Looking Inside the Black Box

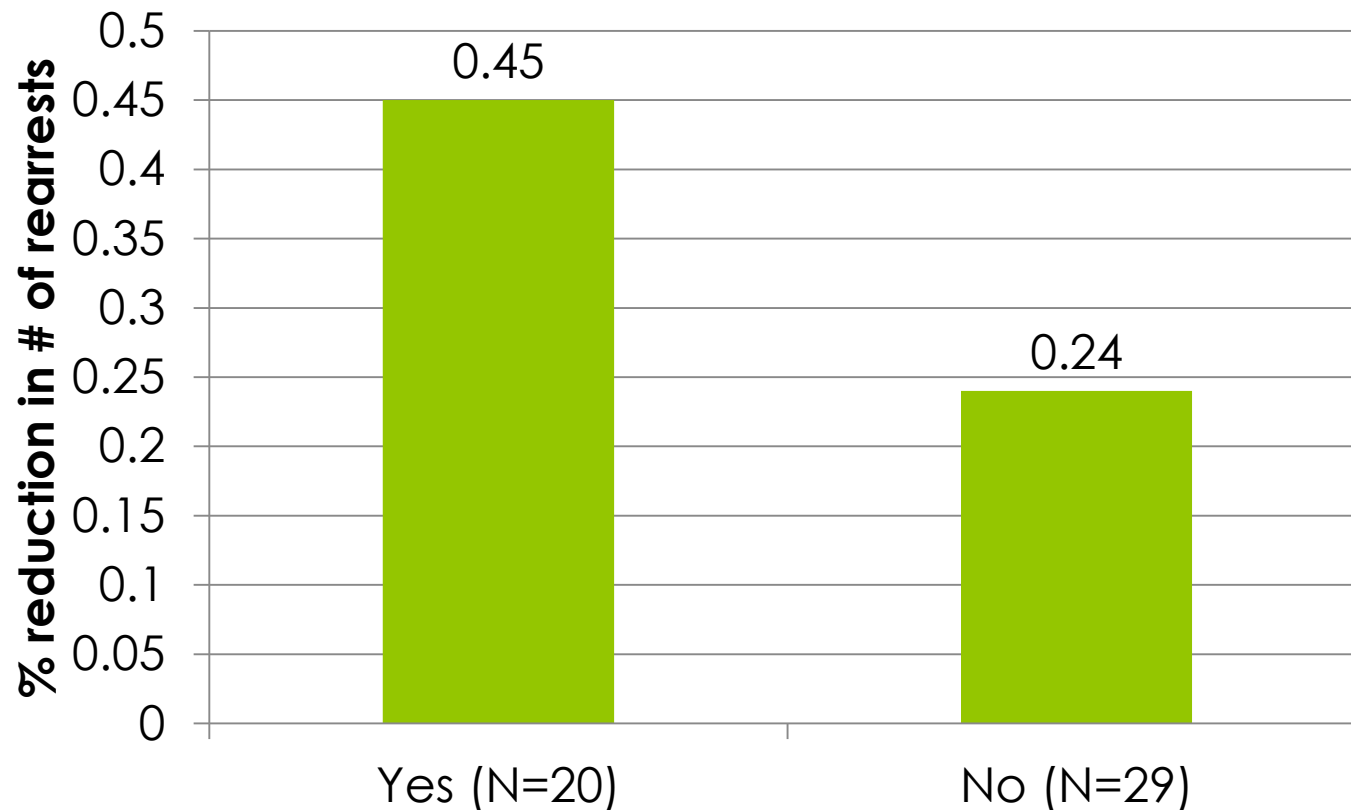
- Through research, determining what components of drug courts have the greatest impact on outcomes
- Identifying which are core to all problem-solving courts vs. specific models
- Impact on recidivism
- Impact on cost savings



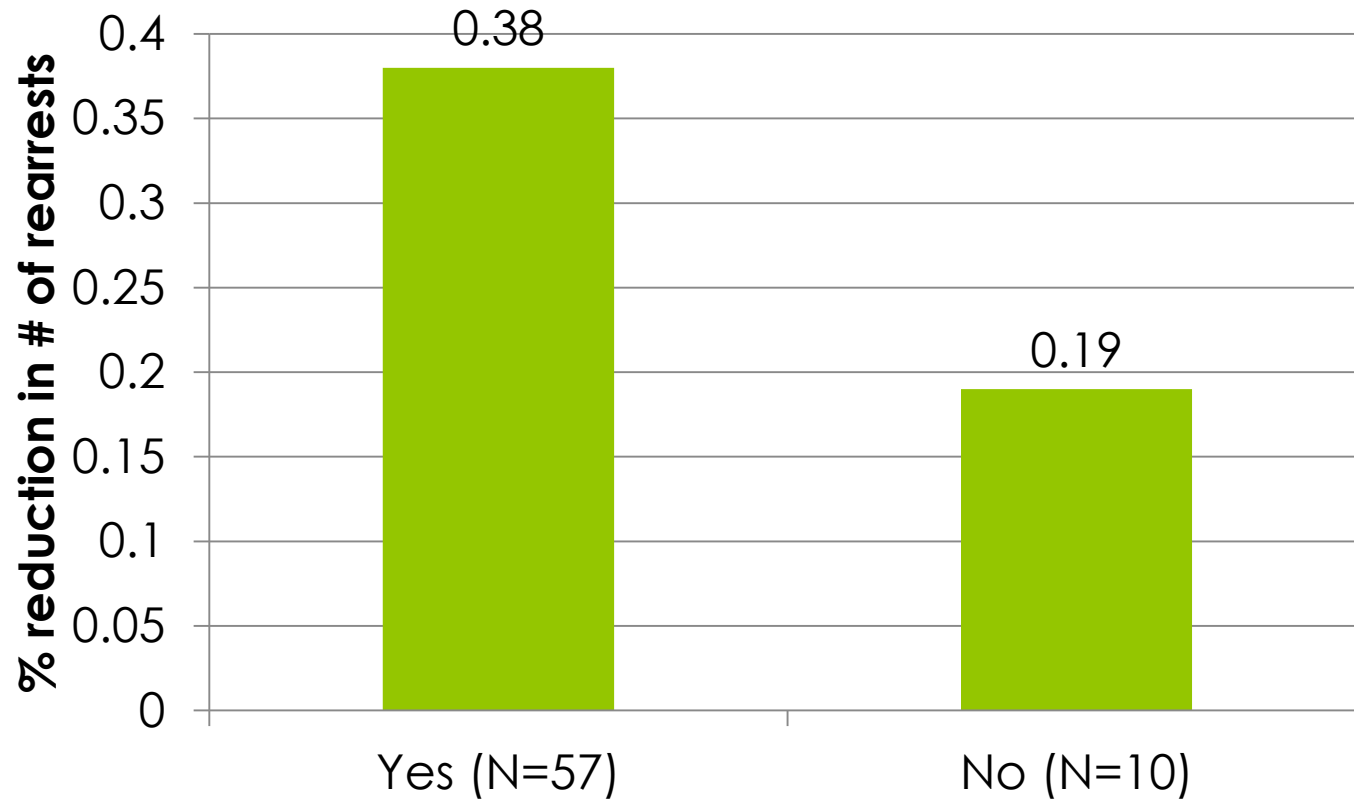
# Recidivism



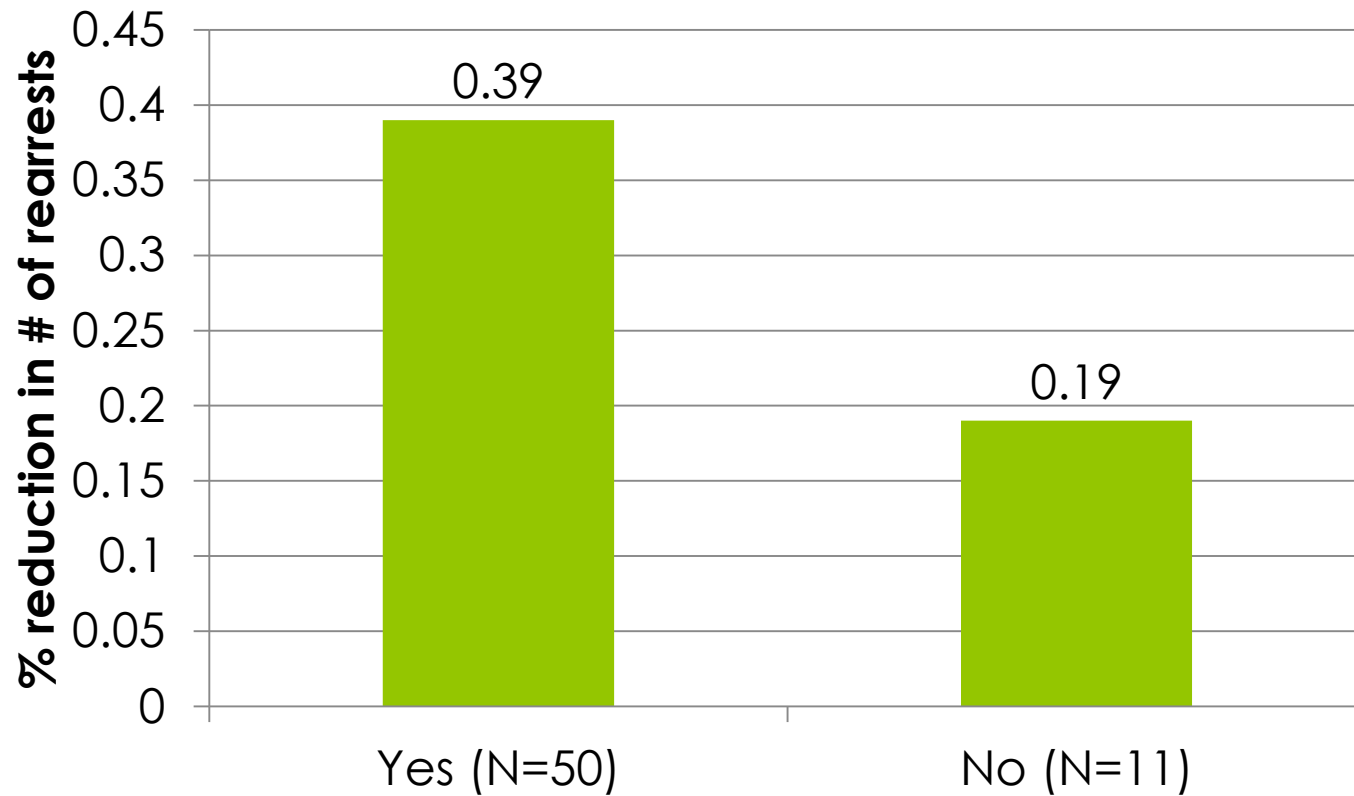
Law enforcement is a member of the team had 88% greater reductions in recidivism



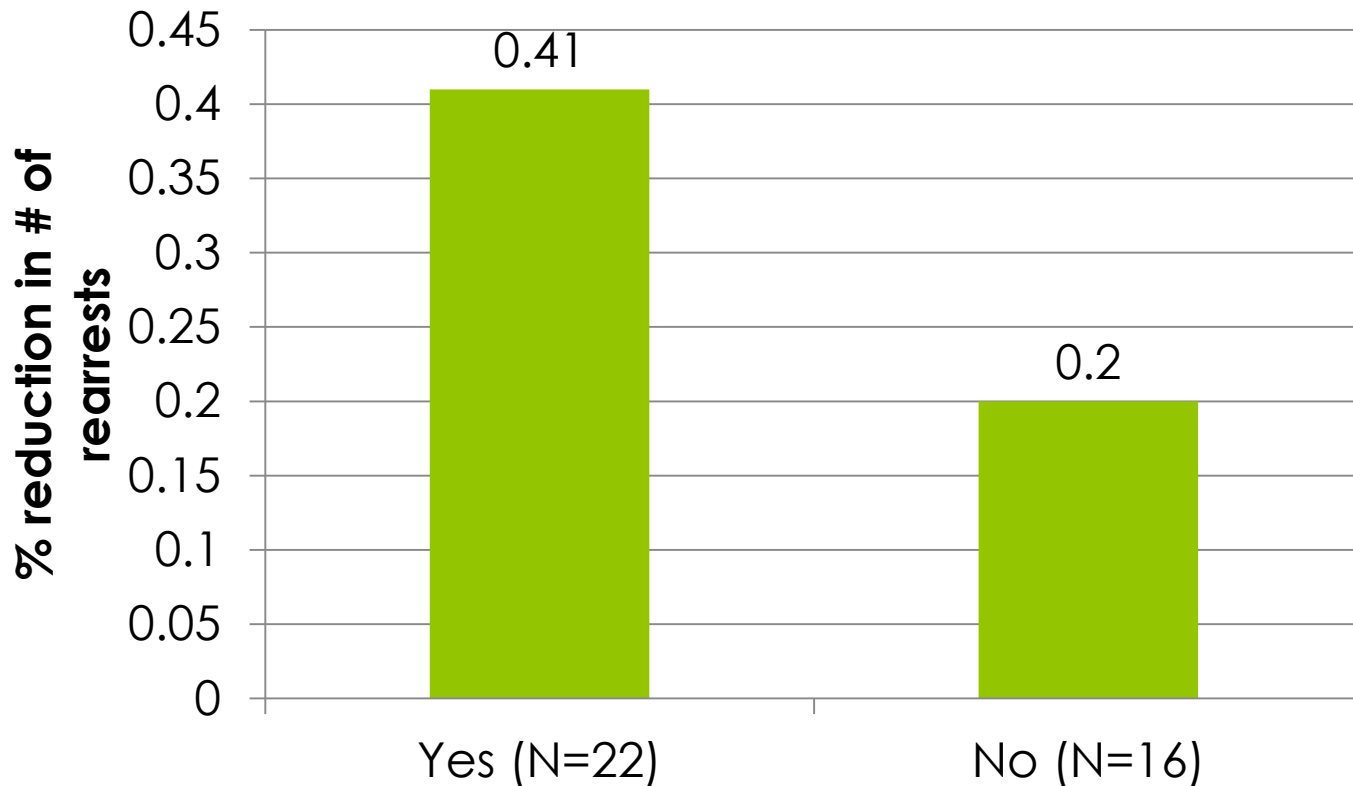
A treatment representative attending court hearings had 100% greater reductions in recidivism



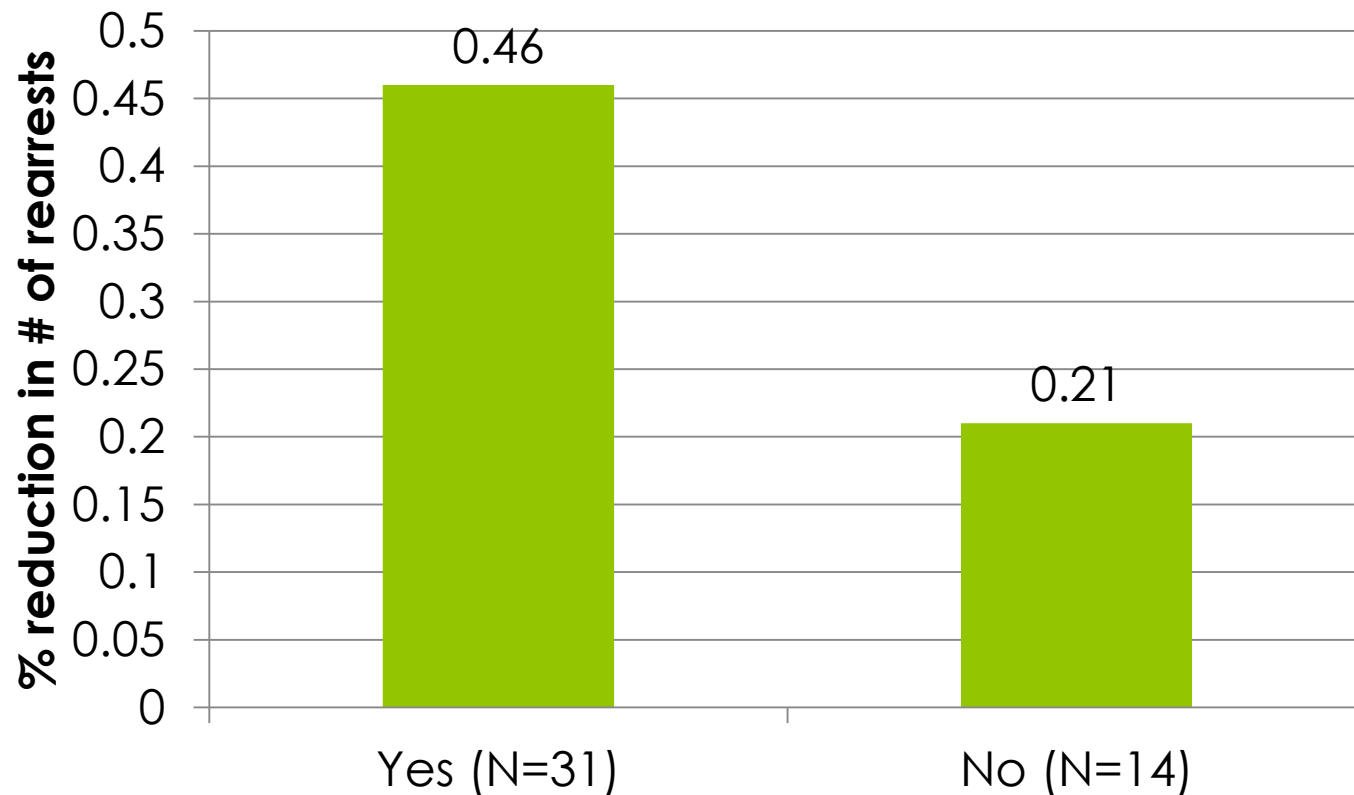
A treatment representative attending court staffings had 105% greater reductions in recidivism



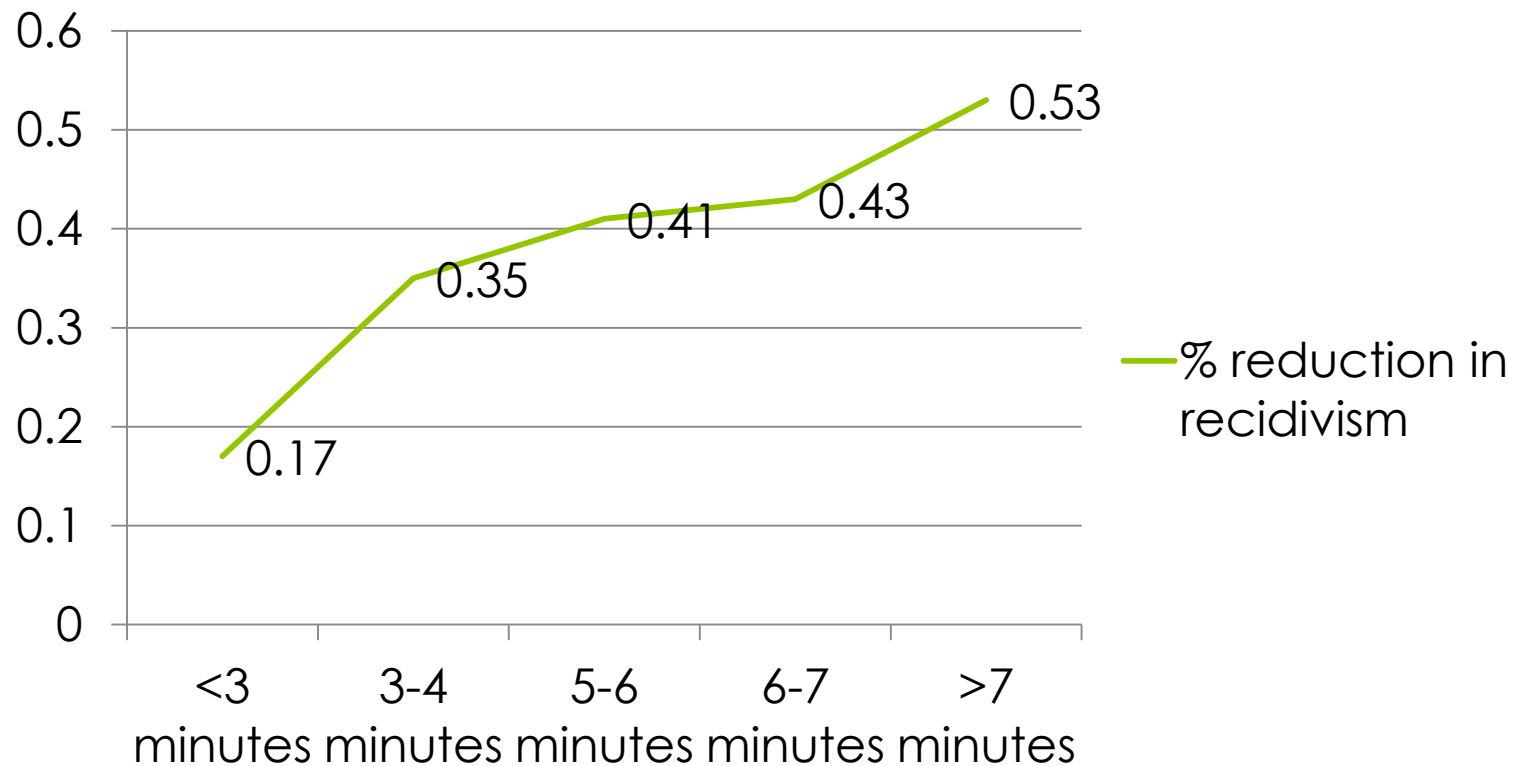
Reviewing data and/or program statistics leading to modifications in program operations had 105% greater reductions in recidivism



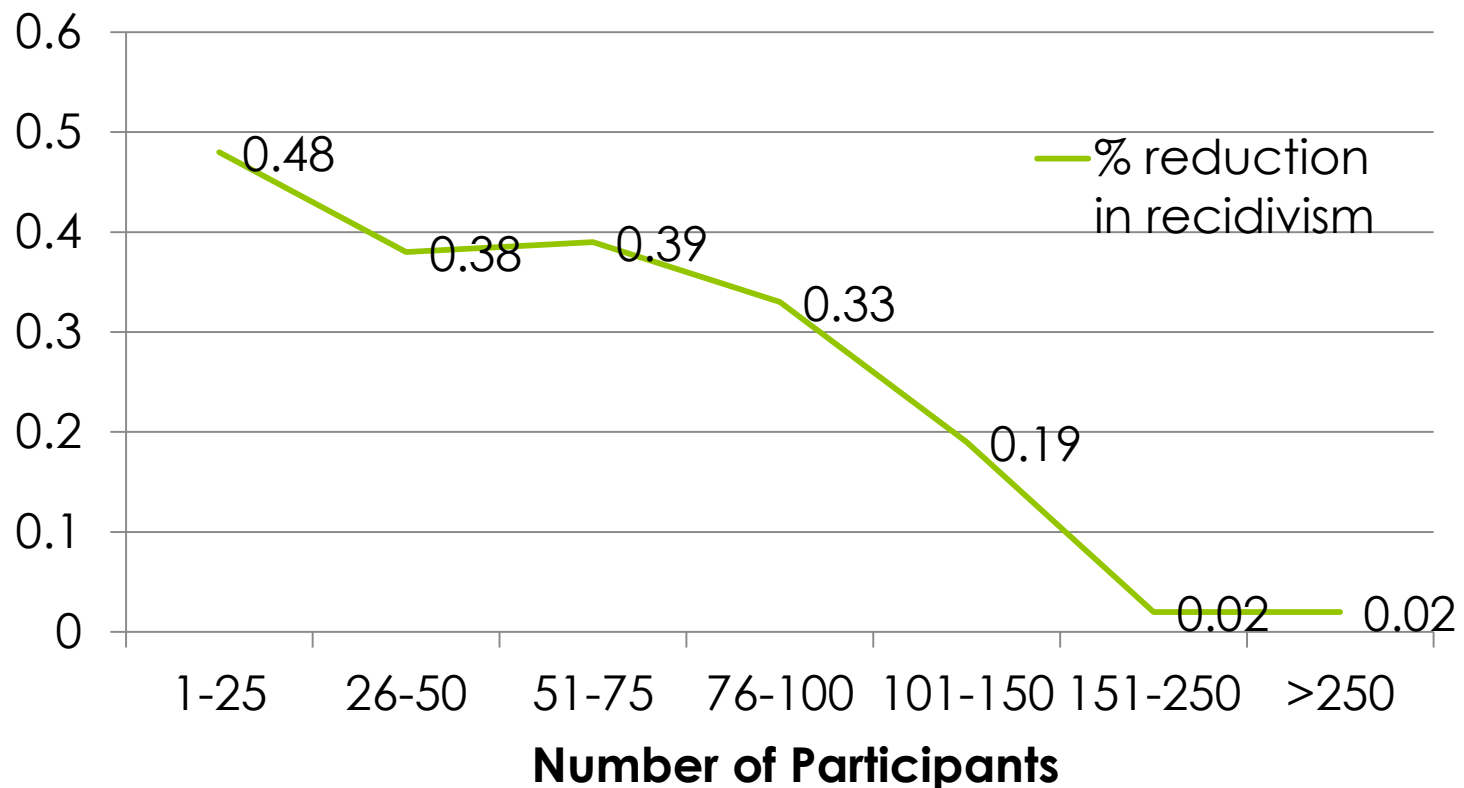
Treatment communicating with court via email had 119% greater reductions in recidivism



Judge spending an average of 3 minutes or more per participant during court hearings had 153% greater reductions in recidivism



Program caseload (# of active participants) of less than 125 had 567% greater reductions in recidivism

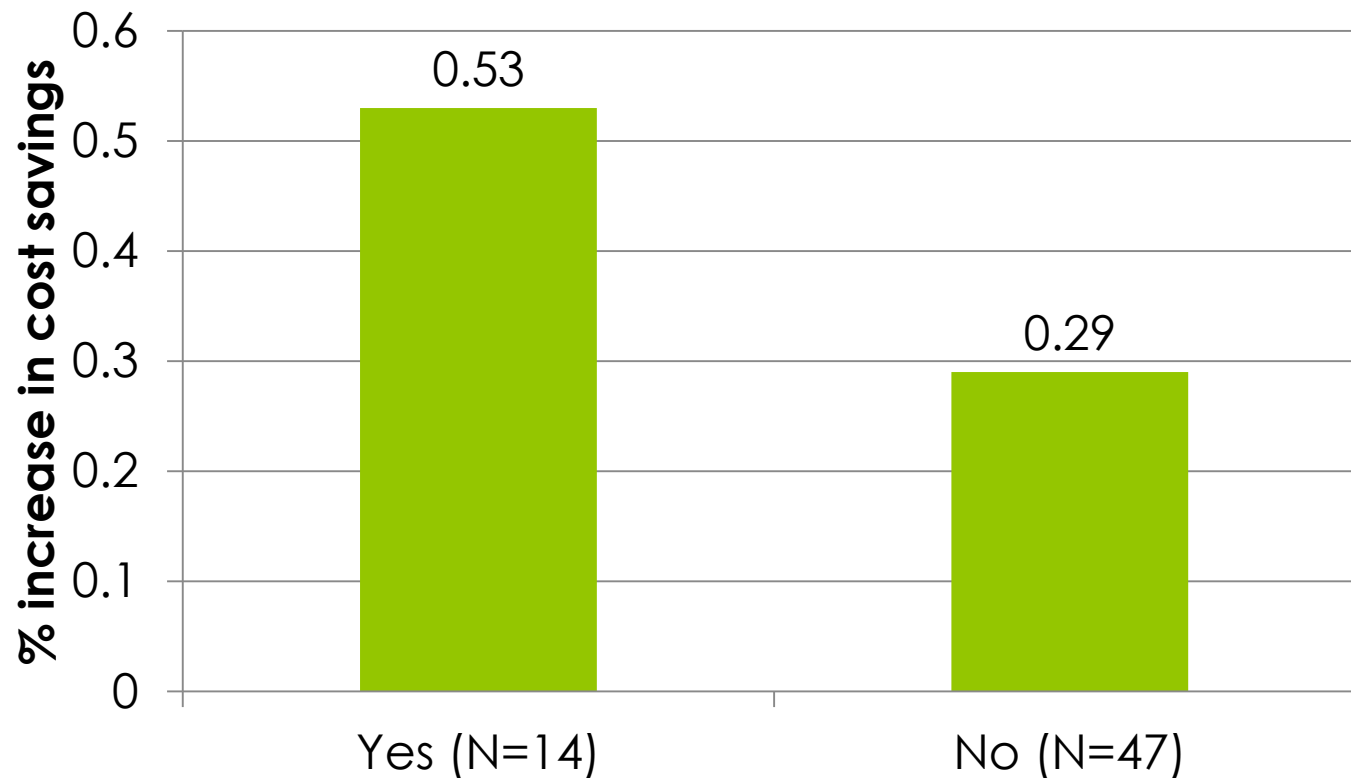




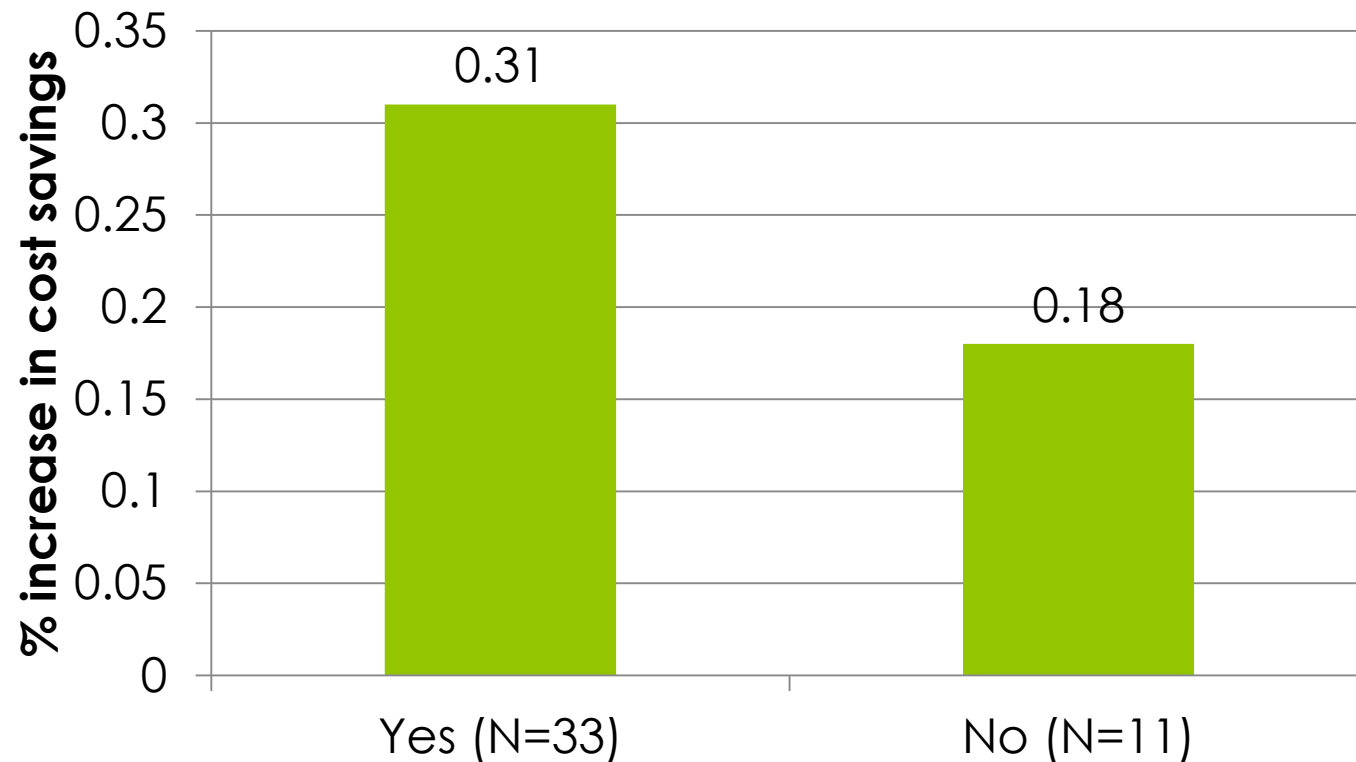


# Cost Savings

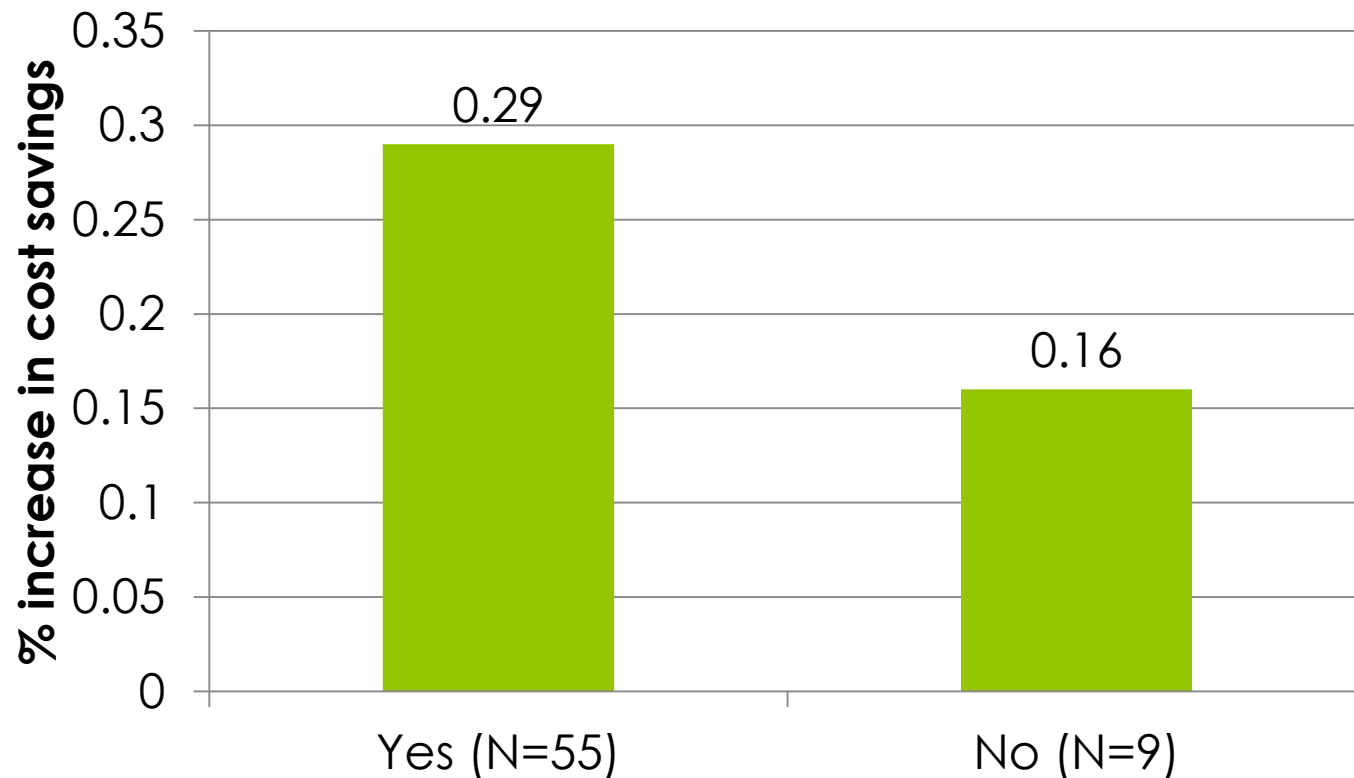
Law enforcement attending court sessions had 64% higher cost savings



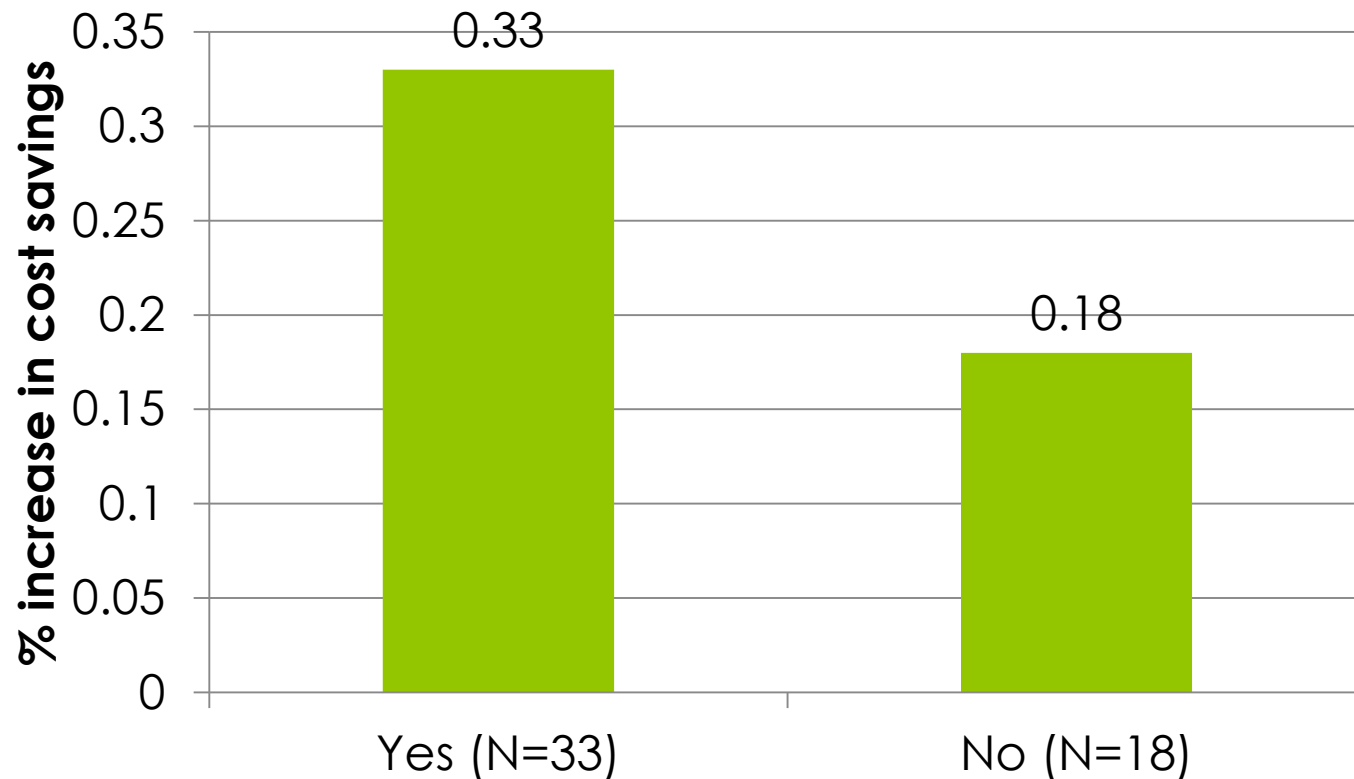
Team members are given a copy of the guidelines for sanctions had 72% higher cost savings



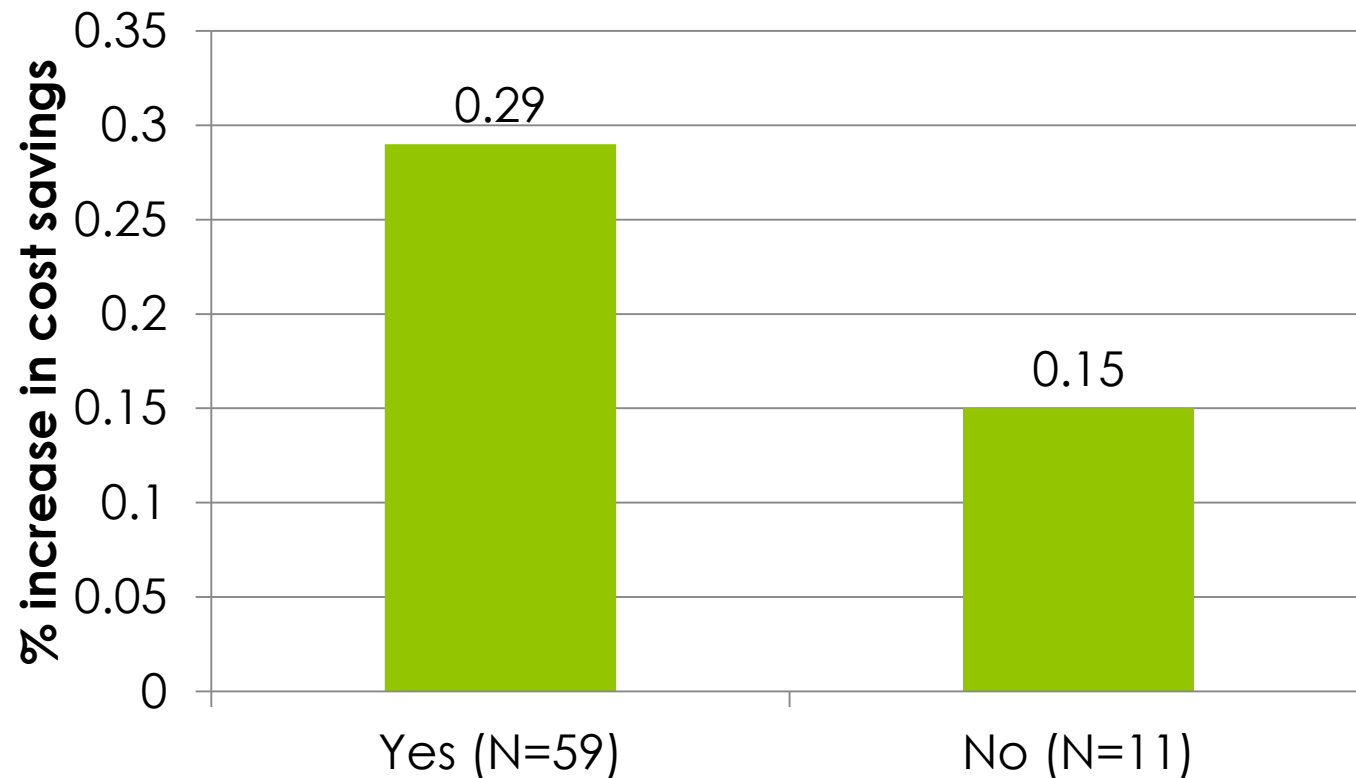
A representative from treatment attending court sessions had 81% higher cost savings



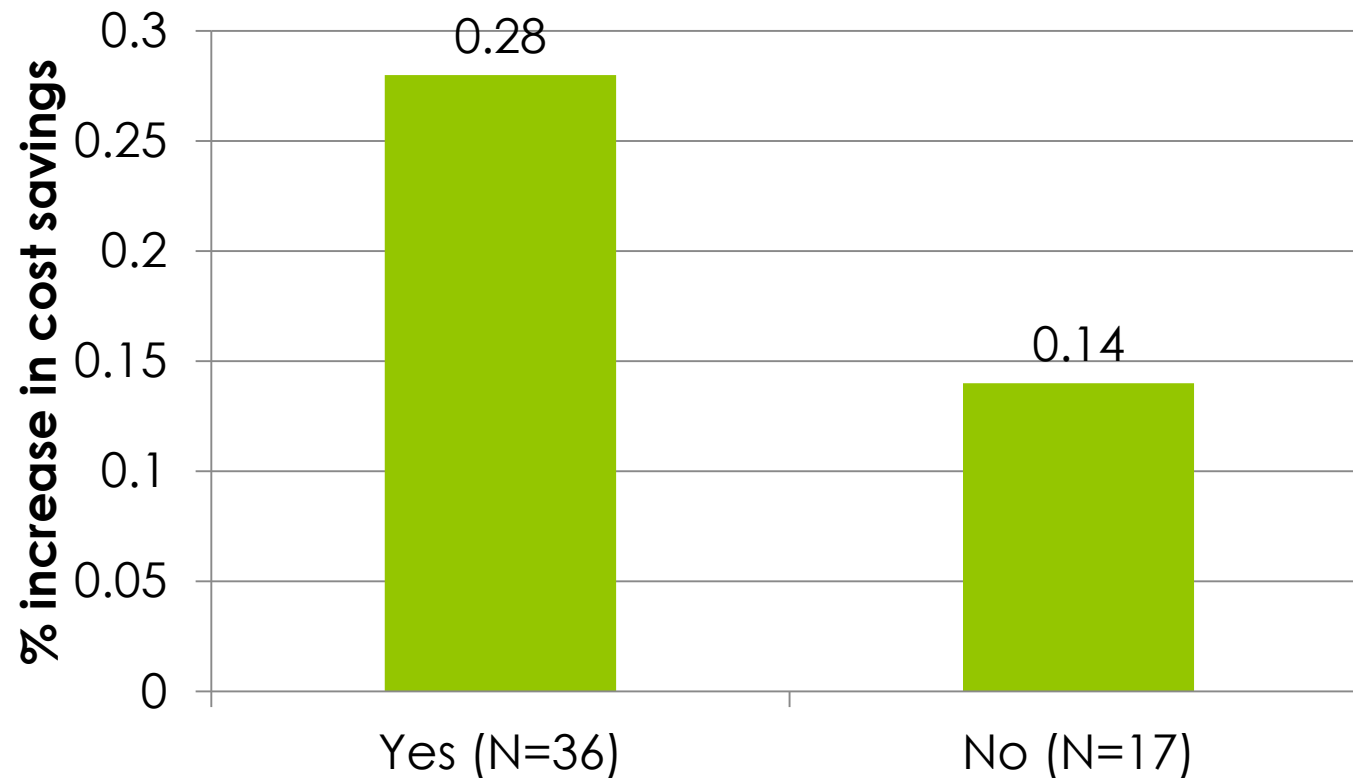
In order to graduate, participants must have a job or be in school  
had 83% higher cost savings



# Defense attorney attending court staffings had 93% higher cost savings

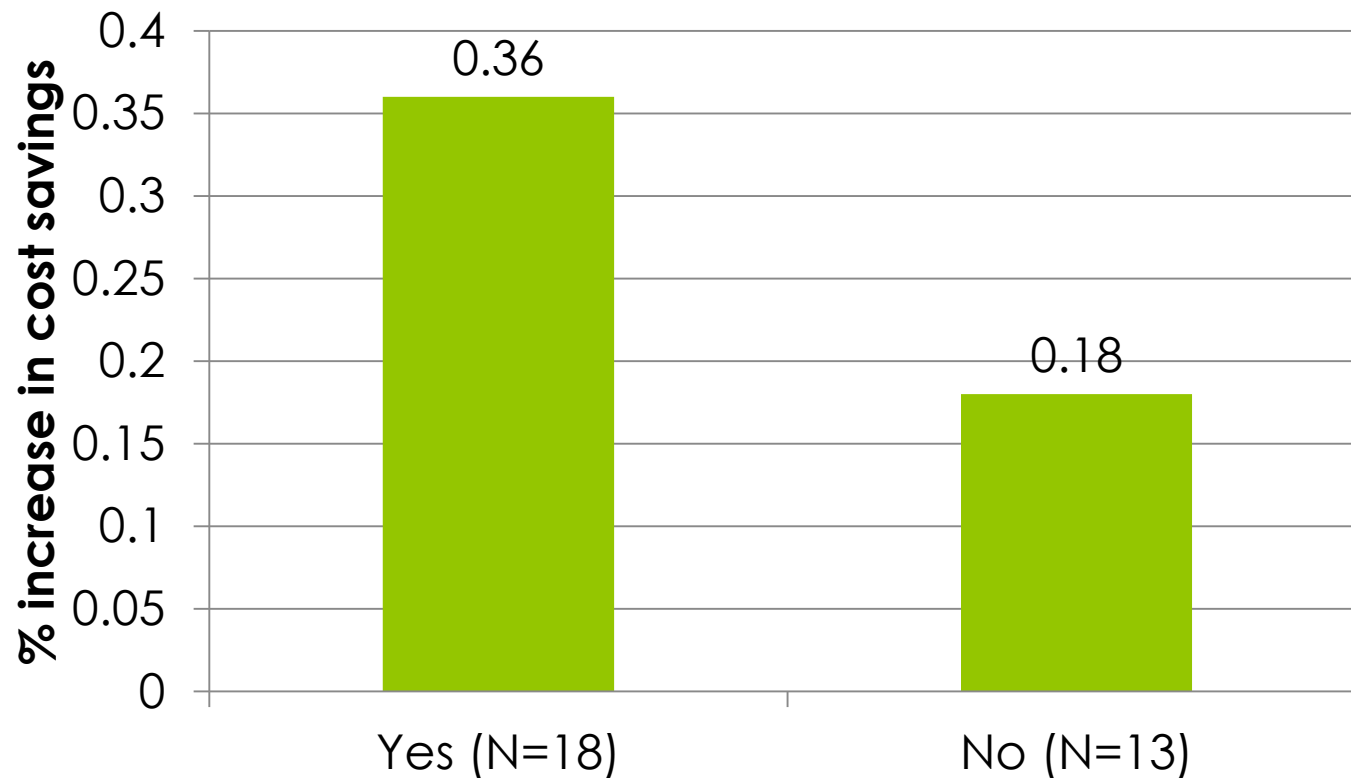


Sanctions imposed immediately after  
non-compliant behavior had 100%  
higher cost savings

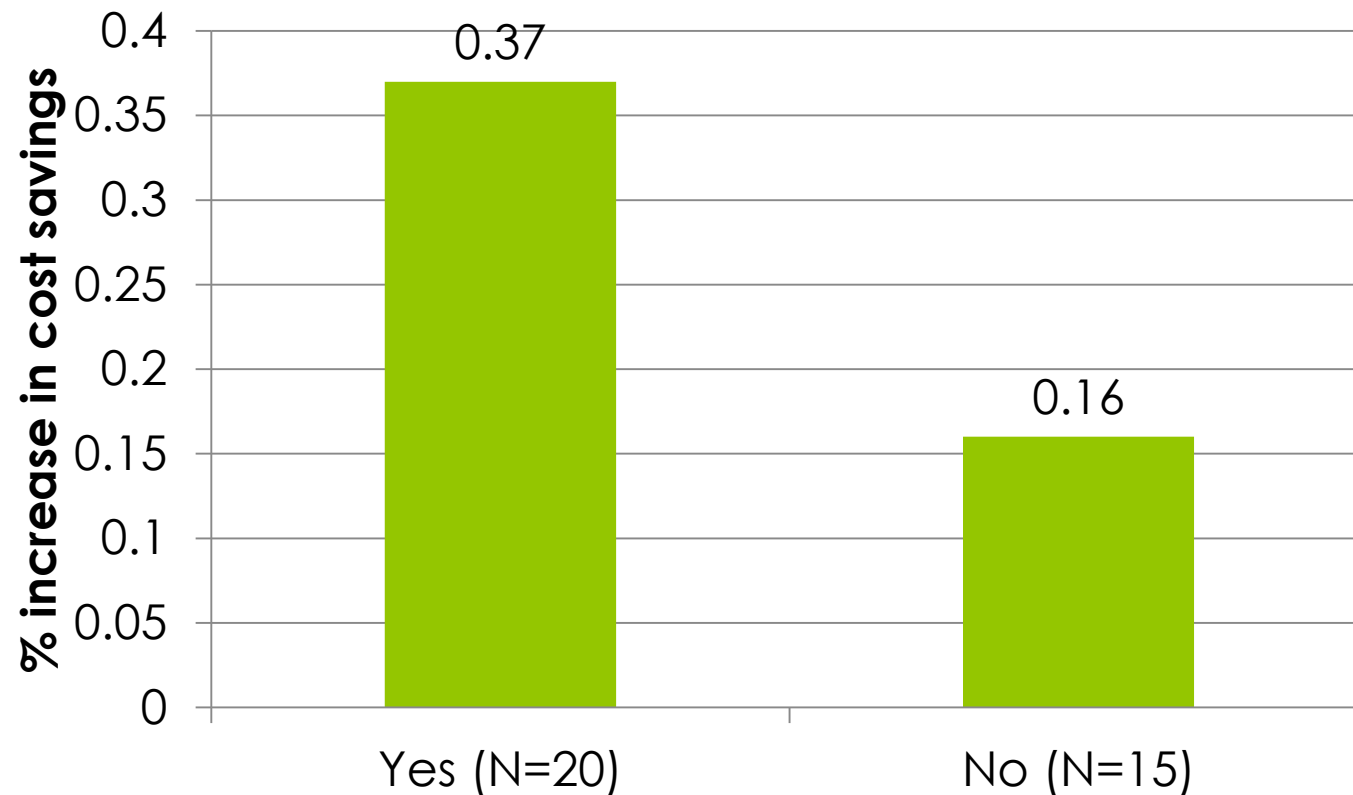




Results of program evaluations leading to modifications in operations had 100% higher cost savings



Reviewing data and stats leading to modifications in operations had 131% higher cost savings



# Other Notable Practices

- Using jail greater than 6 days have worse recidivism
- Sanctions imposed in advance of court hearing had double the cost savings
- Minimum program length of 12 months or more reduced recidivism and increased cost savings
- Parenting classes = 68% reduction in recidivism and 52% greater cost savings (adult, family and juvenile)

# Final Thoughts

- Collecting data and evaluating the data – internally or externally – is critical
- Trust statistically significant data/research
- Modifying programming to remove harmful practices, enhance promising practices and introduce evidence-based practices is a must
- For sustainability of the court and the greatest success of the participants

# Resources

- [Drug Court Review, Volume VIII, Issue 1: Best Practices in Drug Courts](#)
- [Research Update on Adult Drug Courts](#)
- [Research Update on Family Dependency Treatment Courts](#)
- [Research Update on Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts](#)
- [Council of State Governments' Justice Center: Mental Health Courts](#)